

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 DHA-02

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2615

INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

HQ USSOUTHCOM SCJ2

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 MONTEVIDEO 4324

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SUBJ: ARMY CINC HOLDS PRESS CONFERENCE

REF: MVD 4142 (DTG 301304Z OCT 76)

1. SUMMARY. ARMY CINC VADORA WHO SEEMS TO BE EMERGING AS THE MILITARY'S SPOKESMAN, HELD A 70 MINUTE PRESS CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 9 WHERE HE REITERATED THAT THE MENDEZ ADMINISTRATION WILL CONTINUE FOR A PERIOD OF FIVE YEARS. DURING THAT PERIOD POLITICAL PARTIES WILL HAVE TO RESTRUCTURE THEMSELVES AND NEW LAWS AND REGULATIONS GOVERNING THEIR ACTIVITIES WILL BE ENACTED. THE CINC ALSO SAID THAT THE MILITARY WILL CONTINUE TO COUNSEL THE EXECUTIVE BEYOND 1986, WHEN FREE ELECTIONS PRESUMABLY ARE TO BE HELD. HE DEFENDED THE MEASURE WHICH DEPRIVED MOST POLITICAL LEADERS OF THE OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN POLITICAL LIFE, SAYING THAT IT WAS A "FORM OF CLEANSING" THE POLITICAL PARTIES WHICH WILL ALLOW NEW LEADERSHIP TO DEVELOP. ASKED IF THE ARMED FORCES WILL CONTINUE TO HONOR THEIR PROMISE NOT TO PUT A MILITARY MAN IN THE PRESIDENCY, THE CINC REPLIED THAT THERE IS NO SUCH PROMISE

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BUT THAT INSTITUTIONAL ACT 2 PROHIBITS MILITARY OFFICERS FROM OCCUPYING POLITICAL POSTS. HE NOTED HOWEVER, THAT

MILITARY MEN NO LONGER ON ACTIVE DUTY COULD OCCUPY SUCH POSITIONS. ON HUMAN RIGHTS VADORA SAID THERE ARE A FEW MORE THAN 1800 PERSONS STILL DETAINED FOR CRIMES AGAINST THE STATE, WHILE MORE THAN 1400 OTHERS HAVE BEEN FREED AFTER COMPLETING THEIR SENTENCES. VADORA ALSO SAID THAT COMPLETE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IS IMPOSSIBLE AT THIS TIME BECAUSE URUGUAY IS IN A PERIOD OF CONFLICT. ON TRADE UNION FREEDOM HE ANNOUNCED THAT THE GOU IS STUDYING WAYS TO RESTRUCTURE THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT TO PROVIDE THE COUNTRY WITH DEMOCRATIC UNIONS. REFERRING TO THE KOCH AMENDMENT AND THE ELECTION OF CARTER, VADORA SAID URUGUAY WILL CONTINUE ITS POLICY TOWARD THE UNITED STATES AND THAT IF THERE ARE TO BE ANY CHANGES IT IS UP TO THE UNITED STATES TO CHANGE ITS POLICY WITH RESPECT TO URUGUAY. HE ALSO DOWNPLAYED RUMORS THAT EX-SENATOR AND PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE WILSON FERREIRA IS AN ADVISOR TO PRESIDENT-ELECT CARTER. FINALLY, VADORA SAID THAT THE ECONOMIC TEAM IS STUDYING THE PROBLEM OF PRICES AND SALARIES AND THE LOSS OF REAL INCOME AND THAT BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR THERE WILL BE DECISIONS MADE ON THE SUBJECT. THE CONFERENCE, THE SECOND VADORA HAS GIVEN IN TWO WEEKS, REPRESENTS A NEW OPENNESS TO THE MEDIA. IN FACT, VADORA STATED AT THE OUTSET THAT THERE IS A POLICY OF "OPEN DOOR" AND DIALOGUE WITH THE MEDIA. END SUMMARY.

2. POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT.

ARMY CINC VADORA, IN HIS SECOND PRESS CONFERENCE IN TWO WEEKS, REITERATED, ON NOVEMBER 9, THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT MENDEZ WILL CONTINUE FOR FIVE YEARS. HE ADDED THAT THE ARMED FORCES INTEND TO HAVE A CONSTITUTIONAL ROLE IN THE GOVERNMENT IN THE FUTURE. VADORA SAID THAT PRIOR TO 1981, WHEN A SINGLE-CANDIDATE ELECTION FOR PRESIDENT IS TO BE HELD, POLITICAL PARTIES WILL HAVE TO RESTRUCTURE THEMSELVES AND THE GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE TO PROMULGATE NEW LAWS REGULATING THE PARTIES AND THEIR ACTIVITIES. AFTER 1986, WHEN FREE ELECTIONS ARE PROMISED, THE ARMED FORCES WILL HAVE A ROLE IN THE GOVERNMENT AS ADVISORS TO THE EXECUTIVE ON

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SECURITY MATTERS. IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION, VADORA SAID THAT DEPRIVING THE MAJORITY OF POLITICIANS OF THE OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN POLITICS WAS A "FORM OF CLEANSING OF THE PARTIES" WHICH ALLOWS NEW LEADERSHIP TO DEVELOP. ASKED IF THE ARMED FORCES' PROMISE THAT A MILITARY MAN WILL NOT ASSUME THE PRESIDENCY STILL HELD, THE CINC SAID THERE IS NO PROMISE AS SUCH, BUT HE NOTED THAT INSTITUTIONAL ACT NO. 2 PROHIBITS ACTIVE MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY FROM OCCUPYING POLITICAL POSTS. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT MILITARY MEN NO LONGER ON ACTIVE

DUTY COULD TAKE SUCH POSITIONS.

3. HUMAN RIGHTS

THER ARE PRESENTLY "A FEW MORE THAN 1800 PERSONS"
DETAINED FOR "CRIMES AGAINST THE STATE", WHILE MORE
THAN 1400 OTHERS HAVE BEEN FREED AFTER HAVING COMPLETED
THEIR PRISON TERMS. THESE FIGURES DEMONSTRATE, ACCORDING
TO VADORA, THAT ALTHOUGH SOME "CRIMINALS" ARE GOING TO
BE SEVERLY
PUNISHED, THE GREATEST POSSIBLE NUMBER OF
PRISONERS WILL REGAIN THEIR FREEDOM AS THEY COMPLETE
THEIR SENTENCES AND ARE NO LONGER CONSIDERED A DANGER TO
SOCIETY. IN A REPLY TO ANOTHER QUESTION, VADORA SAID
THAT THE ARMED FORCES FAVOR THE PROPOSED STATE OF
DANGER LAW AS IT WILL PERMIT THE CIVILIAN COURTS TO TAKE
JURISDICTION IN CERTAIN CASES WHICH NOW ARE TAKEN UP ONLY
UNDER THE EMERGENCY SECURITY LAWS (MEDIDAS PRONTAS DE
SEGURIDAD). THE CINC ALSO TOLD THE REPORTERS THAT THE
GOU IS STUDYING WAYS TO RESTRUCTURE THE UNION MOVEMENT.
PREVIOUSLY, A DEMOCRATIC TRADE UNION MOVEMENT DID NOT
EXIST, HE SAID, AS THE UNIONS IN URUGUAY WERE RUN BY THE
COMMUNIST PARTY. VADORA SAID, HOWEVER, THAT THE COUNTRY

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MUST DEVELOP DEMOCRATIC UNIONS. WHEN AN EL DIA REPORTER ASKED IF IT WOULD NOT BE BETTER TO HAVE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IN ORDER TO SHOOT DOWN RUMORS, THE GENERAL REPLIED THAT IN FACT RUMORS WERE OFTEN SPREAD BY A FRESS PRESS. HE ADDED THAT URUGUAY IS NOW IN A SITUATION OF CONFLICT AND AS A CONSEQUENCE CERTAIN RESTRICTIONS ON THE PRESS MUST REMAIN IN FORCE. HE NOTED THAT THE PRESS ITSELF EXERCISES SOME CONTROL THROUGH ITS EDITORS, BUT THAT SOME TYPES OF NEWS HAD TO BE CONTROLLED BY THE GOVERNMENT SINCE THEY INVOLVE NATIONAL SECURITY.

4. RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES.

ASKED IF HE THOUGHT RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES WOULD IMPROVE UNDER A CARTER ADMINISTRATION, VADORA REPLIED THAT URUGUAYAN POLICY TOWARDS THE UNITED STATES WOULD REMAIN CONSTANT AND IT WAS UP TO THE UNITED STATES TO CHANGE ITS POLICY TOWARDS URUGUAY IF THINGS WERE NOT TO BE AS THEY HAVE BEEN UP TO NOW. (THE LATTER STATEMENT APPARENTLY REFERRING TO THE RECENTLY ENACTED AMENDMENT CUTTING OFF MILITARY AID TO URUGUAY.) VADORA, RESPONDING TO A QUESTION ON THE RUMOR THAT EX-SENATOR AND PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE WILSON FERREIRA IS TO BE AN ADVISOR ON LATIN AMERICA TO PRESIDENT-ELECT CARTER, SAID THAT MR. CARTER IS FREE TO USE ANY ADVISOR HE WISHED AND THAT THE GOU WOULD MAKE ITS OPINIONS KNOWN IF NEW EVENTS UNCLASSIFIED
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OCCUR WHICH ATTACK URUGUAYAN POLICY. HE ADDED THAT HE FELT THAT UNDER THE U.S. SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT MANY VOICES WOULD BE HEARD AND THE USG WOULD NOT LIMIT ITSELF TO LISTENING TO A SINGLE SOURCE OF INFORMATION.

5. THE ECONOMY.

ASKED TO COMMENT ON THE INCREASE IN PRICES IN RELATION TO INCOME, THE CINC NOTED THAT THE ECONOMIC TEAM IS STUDYING THE PROBELM OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF PRICES AND SALARIES FOR NEXT YEAR AND THAT BEFORE THE END OF 1976 "THERE WILL BE DECISIONS".

6. COMMENT. THEFOREGOING SYNOPSIS OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE WAS TAKEN FROM THE WRITTEN REPORTS PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 10. PARTS OF THE COMMENTS WERE TAPED AND BROADCAST ON RADIO AND TV NOVEMBER 9. OUR INFORMATION INDICATES THAT THE CONFERENCE WAS ATTENDED BY ALL MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES IN URUGUAY AND THAT THE QUESTIONS WERE SUBMITTED PRIOR TO THE MEETING. COMING ON THE HEELS OF VADORA'S CONFERENCE WITH THE FOREIGN PRESS, AND ANNOUNCEMENTS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE MORE OPEN, THIS EVENT MAY PRESAGE A SOMEWHAT FREER EXCHANGE AND FLOW OF INFORMATION FROM THE GOVERNMENT TO THE PEOPLE. CERTAINLY THE MERE FACT THAFI THE REPORTER FROM EL DIA COULD PUBLICLY QUESTION THE GOU POLICY ON FREEDOM OF THE PRESS INDICATES A NEW SPIRIT OF OPENNESS. VADORA SAID "ALL DOORS ARE OPEN" FOR THE PRESS TO OBTAIN INFORMATION. THE CINC ALSO NOTED THAT PRESIDENT MENDEZ WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR A SIMILAR PRESS CONFERENCE WHEN THE MEDIA SO DESIRES. THE AVOWED INTENTION OF THIS NEW POLICY, ACCORDING TO VADORA, IS TO PUT THE TRUE SITUATION OF

URUGUAY BEFORE THE PUBLIC, BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD. USIS SOURCES
TELL US THAT THE NEW EVENING TABLOID MUNDO COLOR, PUBLISHED BY
EL PAIS, WAS ENCOURAGED BY THE MILITARY TO SAMPLE PUBLIC OPINION
OF THE SPEECH. SEVEN SHORT MAN-ON-THE-STREET INTERVIEWS WERE
PRINTED WHICH INCLUDED COMMENTS SUCH AS "I HOPE THAT THE PROMISES
OF ELECTIONS ARE FULFILLED", "HE HAS THINGS ON THE RIGHT TRACK
BUT I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA THAT THEY FULFILL THE PROM-
ISES FOR ELECTIONS", "I STARTED TO SEE IT LAST NIGHT ON TELEVIS-
ION BUT I WASN'T SATISFIED WITH WHAT HE SAID AND I TURNED OFF THE
TV", "HE WASN'T BAD, BUT HE WASN'T GOOD EITHER", "THE ONLY
THING HE SAID WAS THAT EACH CITIZEN MUST STAY IN HIS PLACE".
THE MINI INTERVIEWS WERE ACCOMPANIED BY PHOTOS AND IN ALL BUT ONE
CASE THE NAMES OF THE RESPONDENTS. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME IN YEARS
THAT WE HAVE SEEN SUCH OPEN CRITICISM OF A MILITARY LEADER
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